

Fiber Facts

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Do you or someone you know suffer from heart disease, constipation or irregular bowel movements? Are you trying to lose weight feel hungry all the time? If you answered yes to any of these questions, continue reading this article. I am going to introduce a product found naturally in nature and in many of the foods we eat on a daily basis. You may be wondering what product this is. That product is fiber. According to the Food and Drug Administration, the daily recommended intake (DRI) of fiber is 20-35 grams. The average American does not consume half of this amount. There are 2 types of fiber that promotes health and wellness. They are soluble and insoluble fiber.

Soluble fiber may help to protect against coronary heart disease, colon cancer and gallstone formation. Soluble fiber can help reduce cholesterol levels by breaking up plaque buildup in the bloodstream. In order for this to be true, the food item must be low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and total fat and also provide at least 0.6 grams of soluble fiber per serving. Soluble fiber is found in fruits and vegetables including the skin and grain products such as Koshi Heart to Heart cereal, Cheerios and oatmeal (the regular unsweetened type)

Insoluble fiber helps with regular bowel movements. In the gastrointestinal tract, insoluble fiber attracts water, creating softer bulkier stools. This helps with the prevention and treatment of hemorrhoids, diverticulosis and constipation. Prunes are high in fiber and contain a laxative substance. Other sources of insoluble fiber are also found in fruits and vegetables including the skin and Brazil nuts, bran and whole-grains such as whole-wheat flour, All Bran cereal, Fiber One cereal, Fiber All cereal and Bran Flakes.

Both forms of fiber can help with weight management. Foods that are high in fiber tend to be low in fat and simple sugars providing less total calories. Fiber aids with weight management by accumulating fluid and slowing down the digestion and absorption process thus allowing you to feel fuller longer and not as hungry. The following food sources provide 3-5 grams of fiber per serving and are both soluble and insoluble sources: 1/3 cup All Bran cereal, 1/3 cup Fiber One cereal, 1/2 cup of cooked Barley, 1 cup whole wheat pasta, 1/2 cup dried beans, peas, or legumes, 3 cups air popped popcorn, 1 medium apple, 2 kiwi, 1/2 cup blackberries, 10 figs, 1/2 cup raspberries, 10 snow pea pods, 1oz almonds, 3 graham crackers, 3 triscuit crackers, 1 small corn on the cob, 1 TBL wheat germ, and 1 slice of pumpernickel bread.

If you are not used to eating a high fiber diet on a regular basis, please don't go out and change all your food choices to be high fiber foods. You want to gradually increase your intake of fiber. If you do not, chances are your body won't react kindly and may experience side effects such as gas, bloating, heartburn, diarrhea or constipation. If you gradually increase your daily intake by 1 serving a day for a few days and then increase that by another serving per day, your body will adapt a lot easier. When increasing your fiber intake, drink adequate amounts of fluid. If not there is a good chance constipation will result instead of regulating bowel movements. Recommended

fluid intake is 8 eight ounce glasses or 64 oz. This does not have to be plain water. Fluid includes milk, lemonade, ice tea, soup, jello and fruit.

The daily DRI of fiber can be met if foods are chosen wisely. When reading a food label, a rule of thumb is 3 grams of fiber per serving is a good high fiber choice. Since both soluble and insoluble fiber has many benefits to promote health, include a wide variety of fruits and vegetables along with whole grain products daily. Chances are if you include these food choices into all your meals, you will meet the recommended DRI of 20-35 grams per day.